

Dear Madam Chairman,

My name is Crystal Stipe and I receive person care assistance in order to help me lead an independent life. My personal care assistant is currently my mother. She helps me shower and dress in the morning, prepares some food, takes care of some household tasks, does my laundry and helps me prepare for bed every evening. These are all tasks that I cannot do on my own. I am fortunate that my mom is kind enough to do things for me that need to be done, regardless of compensation.

Prior to my current situation, I was a college student at The University of Montana and had a fellow student as a PCA. It was during that experience I realized the importance of being able to offer a competitive salary. The woman who helped me needed the work to help pay college expenses; she was very good at her job and I'm extremely lucky that she was willing to work those set number of hours each week and provide extra help without compensation when I was in a big bind.

I have been extremely fortunate that I have always had PCAs who thought more about the help they were giving than the compensation they were getting. The work that PCAs do is not always easy and often requires that they do more than can described by a simple check mark on a timesheet. Please consider that to someone like me, the services they provide mean that I can have a home, a career and a productive, satisfying life. I'm not sure I can adequately describe exactly just how much that means to me.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Crystal Stipe